

Timor Leste : Country Brief

Infrastructure and Employment Generation in Timor Leste

The ILO has implemented a series of rural infrastructure works programmes in Timor Leste using labour-based work methods as a means of providing jobs to unemployed people in the country. Works activities have consisted of public works schemes, using labour-intensive work methods thus generating employment to the jobless as a means of contributing to the governments efforts to provide the disenfranchised with cash income and thereby reduce the incidences of civil unrest.

The past programmes have mainly focused on employment creation as a mitigating measure to reduce and avoid civil unrest in the country. The new rural development programmes are now attempting to give more emphasis on asset creation and building up a sustainable implementation capacity within public and private sectors.

Serbisu Ba Dame

One of these projects, the Serbisu Ba Dame Project (Work for Peace) was implemented in 2007. The objective of this 2.7 million US\$ project was to rapidly increase the purchasing power of unemployed people in the country by providing short-term employment opportunities, including youth and internally displaced people. The project succeeded in providing jobs to more than 46,000 beneficiaries, creating a total of 606,000 workdays of employment. The project outputs were provided during and as a response to a period of civil unrest in the country, thereby attempting to contribute to efforts to defuse the tense political situation. The project was formulated and launched at very short notice and implemented as a crisis response measure during a 6 month period. With funding from the EU, the project was executed in close partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion (MLCR), as well as in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works.

Core activities consisted of rural road rehabilitation (17.2 km) and maintenance (2,325 km) and restoration of irrigation canals (180 km), relying on labour-intensive work methods, thereby channelling a significant amount of project funds to labour wages. The Serbisu ba Dame had a tremendous impact in the country as it clearly demonstrated that on a very short notice it is possible to employ large numbers of unskilled workers in public works schemes, thereby combining the provision of cash income with productive employment. As a result, both the government and the donors are now keen to replicate the results, scaling up the coverage and volume of works and implementing the scheme for a longer duration.

It is important to note that the success of the Serbisu ba Dame Project has given the reputation of the ILO a significant boost in Timor Leste. Being able to provide 46,000 beneficiaries with short-term employment on a short notice in a crisis situation and during such a short project period has proved that the ILO can be effective and act in a timely manner when implementing employment-intensive public works. As a result the donors involved in funding such schemes in TL are now keen to see the ILO taking on a key role in the implementation of future programmes of such nature.

TIMworks

In 2008 a new project initiative was agreed with the Government of Norway, Irish Aid, the European Union and the Timor Leste Government. The project forms part of an overall strategy which links to and evolves from the recent cash for work programmes, to more sustainable employment in the infrastructure sector in which major Government investments are now being planned, thereby providing in increased employment opportunities, in particular with the application of labour-based works technology.

Recognising the twin challenges of job creation and need for infrastructure improvements, the project aims to mainstream labour-based technology within regular public works programmes. The project is focussing to a large extent on building up local capacity both in public and private sectors to plan, build and maintain rural infrastructure, while at the same time improving 300 km of rural roads and placing 1,500 km of roads under regular maintenance. It is estimated that the works will generate more than one million workdays, providing short-term employment and cash income to 23,500 beneficiaries.

TIMworks is currently up and running with field activities in seven districts.

RBSA Funding for Timor

The RBSA allocation to EIIP activities in Asia aims to provide local development through infrastructure and employment creation. As part of this initiative, the following activities have commenced in Timor Leste:

- Develop labour-based training courses for universities and polytechnics,
- Develop training material and courses for the private construction industry,
- Establish a routine maintenance system using labour-based methods and community contracting in two districts with 250 km of roads maintained and 37,000 workdays of employment generated.
- Support to Government in formulating the nationwide Workfare programme into which ILO components are integrated,
- Wage assessment for rural works in the infrastructure sector to determine appropriate minimum wage levels.

The RBSA programme in Timor is closely interacting with the TIMworks project. Experience from the actual road works carried out under TIMworks is reflected in the training material and conduct of courses. Equally, TIMworks benefits from the outputs of this RBSA initiative in the form of training tools, maintenance guidelines and the wage assessment.

Further Reading on Timor Leste

- [TIM-Works Project Brief](#)
- [Training on Labour-based Technology and Contract Management for Private Contractor](#), Pen Sonath, 2009
- [Appropriate Wage Rate and Related Issues for Employment Intensive Public Works Programme in Timor Leste](#)
- [TIM Works Project – Independent Mid-Term Evaluation Final Report](#) by Bas Athmer, January 2010
- [TIM Works Progress Report No 4, October 2009 – March 2010](#)